SECTION II

THE NATURE OF MUSICAL ATTENTION AND OF MUSICAL SHAPE

We have now realised how keenly close attention must be striven for by the pupil; this brings us to a consideration of the next practical question, *how* such attention is to be brought about immediately and inevitably.

Attention through key-resistance and time.

The answer is the one I have already so often insisted upon — the only possible way of attending to Music during Performance is through that duplex form of attention, attention through *key-resistance*, and attention through *time*.

Whatever the passage, whether of the slowest *cantabile*, or the lightest and swiftest *agility*, we can only attend to it by unremittingly giving our minds, in the first place, to the requirements of the instrument itself, that is, to the *constantly varying resistance of the key* itself during its descent, corresponding to the various tones required.

And again, in the second place, it is only possible definitely to guide the forces we are thus prompted to expend, by definitely intending and accurately fulfilling a "Time-spot" for each note. In short, to enable us to attend to musical feeling we must (at the Piano) attend to the Key, through its every motion being exactly chosen and timed.[1]

[1] Is not this a strange paradox, that to enable us to play *musically* we must give close attention *mechanically* — through the key-lever; and in the same way, the fiddler must attend through his bow-pressure. Or, to be more accurate, in playing the Piano or Violin we must attend to our tones through the controlled (accurately adjusted) relaxation of our

Here then, we have *two* most definite and tangible facts upon which to keep the student's and artist's mind; and the inevitable corrollary of his thus attending *to key-motion* through *time,* is that he will also be compelled to give the closest and most intimate attention to Music itself — to musical Feeling and Shape. Concerning this question of Time-spot, I have very much more to say today, but concerning that of Key-resistance, I have so fully shown the way in my "Relaxation Studies" and elsewhere, that I need not enter further into this matter now, except perhaps to point out, that these same "Relaxation Studies" are indeed, many of them, merely teaching-devices for this very purpose — to teach the student how to attend to the key.[1]

Meaning of "Time-spot."

Now as to the question of "Time-spot": if a violinist or singer does not give his mind to his work, his instrument warns him instantly and unmistakably, for his intonation becomes faulty, and that is a result which, usually, annoys him too much to be ignored.

Now at the Piano, inattention, it is true, may cause us to play actual wrong notes; but besides such mere "wrong notes," a far worse thing happens, for the very moment we allow ourselves to become inattentive as to the precise Time-spot of every note, that moment we do indeed play

arm-weight, and in singing through the controlled relaxation of our ribs. (*See* the late John H. Kennedy's "Common Sense and Singing" — real common sense on the subject.)

[1] The most important of these Studies (bearing on this particular matter) are the "Resting" and "Aiming exercises," "Throw-off," and "Agility" tests; and, most important of all perhaps, the "Rotation" exercises. In fact, it is impossible to play at all, unless the technical ground covered by such "tests" has been mastered to some extent. The extent of such mastery may indeed be said to form the limit of our technical attainments; which signifies, the *elimination* of all unnecessary exertions, and the accurate *timing* and choice of the required ones.

"out of tune" in a sense — that is, out of tune *as regards time*. And this is far less a mere figure of speech than it would appear to be at first sight, since both are vibrational experiences.[1]

As I have before insisted upon, during performance it is really impossible *definitely* to guide any note, unless we do thus think of its Time-spot: the precise place in Time where the sound is musically due to begin, and where the key's motion is therefore due to *finish* its act of tone-production. The most striking and most definite thing about a note is the fact of its transition from *non*-existence to existence — the moment of transition from Silence to Sound; for this is an absolutely definite point of demarcation at the Piano, as definite as the surface (or beginning) of a piece of wood or stone.[2]

The act of thought or attention itself implies a rhythmical act.

We cannot, therefore, definitely think a note in playing unless we thus *think* the time-place of its *beginning* — the beginning of the sound. Moreover, we must try to realise, that this law has a far deeper significance even than this. The fact is, we cannot experience any act of consciousness, we cannot direct our minds and think about

Similarity between playing out of time and playing out of tune.

[1] We all know that a musical sound is the effect produced upon our mind by the regular recurrence of impulses on our ear. What we call "Time" in Music is, however, quite a similar experience; the recurrence of pulse-throbs are similar to vibration-throbs, but in the first case the recurrences are enormously slower. Hence it is useful and suggestive to remember that "playing out of time" is an evil effect belonging to the same genus as *playing out of tune*; it is just as unclean, sordid and disheartening, just as unnatural, unbeautiful, and un-godly!

[2] In other words, the only way definitely to guide into existence any note at the Piano is clearly to determine the moment when this transition from Silence to Sound is musically due, and to see to it that we so carefully guide the Piano key-lever that it will *finish* its work of tone-production at that precise moment — the moment which we have in our mind musically.

or realise anything definitely, without just such an act of *timing* — a timing of our consciousness. The act of bringing or directing our thought or attention upon anything is therefore a *rhythmical process;* Thought and Rhythm are inseparable. Again, we see the reason why in the absence of Rhythm there can only be Nothingness — emptiness, non-being![1]

"Grip" in performance.

We must insist, therefore, on the pupil clearly realising that he can only obtain "grip" of what he is doing by means of close attention to this fact, *that he must finish* each act of tone-production at the very moment his Time-sense impels him to *wish* each note to *begin*. Having thus something definite to take hold of mentally, this will enable him to think also of the colour he wishes to give each note, its place in the phrase, its place as part of a whole.

As to time-training.

Now here arises the question, how shall we make a pupil understand Time and Rhythm, and why do so few seem to feel it at all? The fault usually arises either from the entire want of, or fault in, early training in this respect.

The fact is, no child should ever be allowed to sound a note at the Piano until his Time-sense has been thoroughly aroused. It is the very first thing, and the most supremely important thing to teach.

Before teaching the note-signs, or even the note-*sounds*, we must teach attention to Pulse. We must make the

As to the interpretation of the term "rhythm."

[1] The term "Rhythm" is of course in this work used in its proper and all-embracing sense, its narrowest and its widest application, and including bar-rhythm, figure-rhythm, phrase-rhythm — the minute rhythm implied in the ever-changing sub-divisions of the bar pulses, as well as the huge rhythmical swing of a whole phrase played *as one single pulse* in Rubato, and the still greater Pulse of a real master-piece when this swings on to its climax with unbroken continuity of purpose — a Whole, which, built up of multifarious ideas and logical successions, is yet welded together as we find it only in the works of the really great composers.

beginner realise that Pulse (the recurrence of *time-distances*) is a material fact, quite easy to realise if only we attend to it; and he should have considerable facility in the appreciation of Pulse and its subdivision before he is allowed to touch the keyboard at all. And when he does so, we must from the first insist on his realising that every note he plays must be accurately fitted into the particular Pulse-scheme chosen by him *as the canvas* upon which to paint his musical picture — and this, however simple the picture may be.[1]

Correct idea of time and shape in music.

This brings us to a very important matter: the correct outlook as to what is meant by Time in Music — important indeed, for if this outlook is incorrect, our whole outlook on Music will necessarily be based on a foundation of sand.

Now we shall find that although the arts of Music and Painting seem so very different, yet we have here a strong parallelism in the basis of both, inasmuch as both depend upon Progression or Movement.

Progression and movement analogous in music and painting.

In painting or drawing the *movement is upon the canvas*, and this in a double sense; for there is, first, an actual *movement* of the painter's brush or pencil in the act of making the picture; and secondly, an actual *movement* again, in viewing the picture — an actual movement *of our eyeballs* in following its lines, or at least a suggestion of such movement.

The origin of our sense of pulse.

[1] That is, the pupil's mind must be brought to notice the phenomenon of Pulse or Beat. This is best done by calling attention to the swing of his stride in walking or running; and remember, he had to learn to feel pulse in a measure before he could encompass either of those accomplishments! Indeed, I opine, that in our gait, we have the *origin* of our feeling of pulse in music. We *imagine* the swing of a walking or running stride; we set one going for every piece we play, and imagining its continuance it thus guides us. How vivid do the Beethoven themes become if we hum them in our rambles through the woods — conceived as so many of these themes doubtless were under a similar impression of fresh air and the accompaniment of a healthy walking stride.

In Music the distinction is, that the movement is upon *a time-surface*, as it were — instead of upon a canvas.

Here then, we have two very close analogies in Music and Painting, unexpected though they may be: (I) This sense of Progression, or Movement, and (II) this necessity of some *medium* upon which to fix our progressions.

In Music we choose some particular sequence of beats or pulses, and upon this particular form of *extension in space*, or Time-spacings, upon this thoroughly tangible *time-canvas* of Pulse we lay out the *progression* of our musical picture, whether as composers or players — just as the painter must lay out his work on *his* canvas.

It may strike you at first that all this is "a very waste of words" but I assure you we are here face to face with one of the fundamental laws of our art, and the teaching of it. Yes, even the uncultured members of an audience can quite well *feel* the effect of rhythm, or its absence. When the Rhythm is strong, they are impressed by the fact that the piece is alive, but when the Rhythm is lax, or Time-continuity is broken up, they feel that it is "as dead as a door nail"; and this, although quite unaware of the cause of their comfort or discomfort. Indeed, so strong is this rhythmical need of the public, that when rhythmical grip is lacking in a performer no other attractions offered by him can save the piece.[1]

Here we have indeed one of those fundamental facts which we must drive home to every pupil, even beginners. It is

[1] We also find that our musical ideas of "Time" and "Progression" are closely correlated; since to enable us to determine the precise "time-spot" of any note, we must think of music itself — in its aspect of progression or movement. And, *vice versa*, attention to musical Progression will also, in its turn, compel our attention to the details of Time and Pulse.

of no use trying to *think* Music unless you think of *progression*, that is, Movement *towards* something or other.

In fact, this forms the best definition of all Form or Shape or Structure in Music, be it phrase, section, sentence or a complete piece. This idea of Movement is the vitalising spark which turns mere notes into living music, this sense of Purpose — this sense of *progressing somewhere*.[1]

The progressional view of music v. the old segmental view.

It is astounding that until lately none of the Theory-teachers seem to have put this fact into words; although, of course, no real musician has ever *felt* music apart from an *unconscious* appreciation of this fact.[2]

Instead of Progression — continuous, purposeful Movement — they have tried to explain Music as consisting of *chunks* or solid segments of accented bars and of unaccented bars, thus giving the mis-impression to the learner, that Music consists of dead, disconnected bits of sound-stone or brick, instead of a living mass, a continuous swing and swirl of Growth.[3]

This idea of *motion* in Music, continuous Movement, we must make clear to anyone and everyone, even to a child at his very first lesson in Music.

Having applied this teaching principle for the last twenty years or so, and knowing its electrifying effect on the student,

[1] A phrase, for instance, may therefore in performance be defined as: a growth, or progression of notes towards a cadence, shown by means of Tone and Rubato inflections.

[2] My old pupil, John B. McEwen, has of course adopted this teaching of mine in his admirable "Phrasing"; and now, on going to press with this MS (October, 1912) I receive a copy of a new work of his just issued, "The Thought in Music," a work full of original thought and research wherein he develops this idea still further and with a masterly hand.

[3] In the "Coda" of this work (Section IV) it will be seen why this progressional view of Music-structure is so vitalising to the student, artist, and teacher.

I tried to call attention to this necessity in the final chapter of my "First Principles," page 126; but most people seem to pass this passage by, without noting that it bears indeed on all they do every day as teachers. This is what I mean by "scanning" the music before trying to play it; the rhythmical shape or *progress* of even the simplest phrase must be understood, if we are to have any chance of playing it correctly, and if our performance is not to drivel into mere musical — or unmusical — babbling.[1]

The difference between the old *segmental* view of structure, and the *progressional* view of musical structure.

[1] This doctrine of Progression or Movement, which I insist upon as the basis of all Shape in performance, is indeed a most important teaching principle — one might say perhaps *the* most important of all. The old way of teaching Form, Form-analysis, Structure, and Interpretation with its false ideas of dead, disconnected segments of music (blocks or chunks) was perfectly useless, musically, to the student. It not only failed to give him any real insight into what constitutes Music in the act of performance, but it failed to draw his attention to Movement as the basis of all Music, and it was therefore positively deadening from a performing point of view. The *progressional* teaching of Musical Structure is on the contrary at once vital, helpful, and interesting to every Music-student, whatever his status, and whatever his branch of study. In my own personal teaching and lectures, I had for many years enforced this principle of "towardness" as the basis of all Music-shape — the basis of all music-teaching, but the idea was not made public in *printed* form until the issue of my "Act of Touch" (page 42) in 1903, and my "*First Principles*" in 1905 — *see* page 126, where the practical application of this study is summarized. In the present lectures (written in 1909) it was of course developed and amplified still further. It is a source of great gratification to me to find that it is now being generally accepted, at least by the more up-to-date Theory teachers of this country. For instance, in a recently issued work (1912) on "Phrasing and Form" I find the following — practically a quotation from a *synopsis* of this present lecture published in "The Music Student" of April, 1911, and of which Synopsis a reprint is given in the Appendix to this work: "The next matter to which attention "must be directed in order to arrive at any intelligent basis for our phrasing "is the fact that everything in music must be considered in the light of "progression, or movement towards some more or less clearly defined desti-

When we teach a baby to say "Mamma" and "Papa" we do try at the earliest possible moment to make him realise that "Papa" and "Mamma" do mean something definite; in fact that these sounds stand for two very definite and important people! Nevertheless, in teaching the child to talk through the Piano, the inconceivable folly is committed of allowing him to babble — to make unmeaning noises; and this, often until he is an adult, without any attempt to make him realise that Music consists of words and phrases — connected sound-movements — like any other language![1]

Some examples of the progressional view of structure.

As this idea of looking for Shape in the sense of progression — or "scanning" — may be unfamiliar to many of you, let me give you some examples of what I mean. Let us take the first half of "God Save the King," as one of the simplest of tunes. It consists as you know of three *bits*, each bit with its little climax, and the third "bit" forming a capping climax to the other two. That is, the first bar *progresses* to

"nation. This is true whether we have in our thoughts the gradual but "inevitable working up of some extended passage towards a strong emo- "tional climax, or of the no less essential 'trend' of some figure of a few "notes towards the point where it finds its own completion," etc. Further quotations occur on subsequent pages; and finally, it is gratifying to find in the preface of his work, that the author gracefully acknowledges the source of these teachings, and that he has presented them with delightful conciseness.

[1] The root of the trouble is that children are taught Music the wrong side up. The usual false beginning is to try to make them associate paper signs with keyboard-places, instead of beginning, as one should do, by trying to make them recognise actual sounds, actual Time, and Music-shapes, — matters which are mostly left to dawn upon them later on, as an afterthought! Mrs. Spencer Curwen, in her admirable "Child Pianist," started the crusade against this topsy-turvydom, and her views are more and more rapidly gaining ground, as we see by the various imitators who have adopted her ideas.

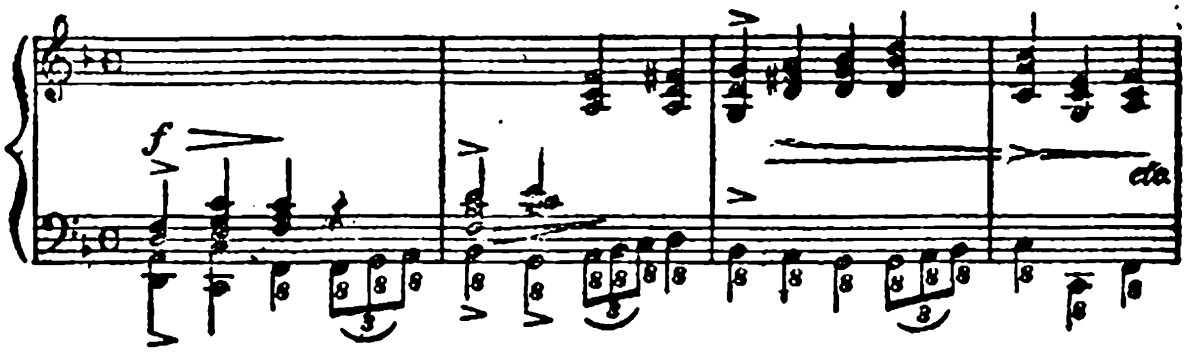
the second (at *a*), the third bar to the fourth (at *b*), and the fifth bar to the sixth (at *c*), thus:

EXAMPLE 5.



We find a similar structure, and it is a very usual one, (two short, or less accented progressions capped by a longer or stronger one) in the opening of Schumann's first Novellette. From the barring of this (totally incorrect as it is) one would imagine, that the piece was meant to sound all upside-down musically, thus:

EXAMPLE 6*a*.

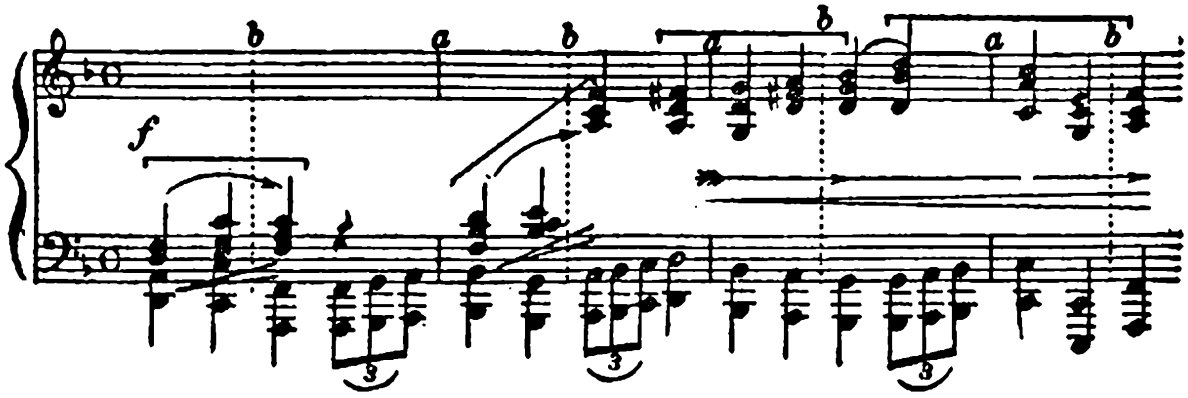


Schumann's Novellette played with accentuation as barred in the original.

But of course he did *not* mean this; therefore here, as so often elsewhere, we must totally disregard the written barlines (or written accentuation) and must be led by our own musical sense; and we then find that this opening phrase consists of *three progressions*, each moving towards its little climax or crisis, and the three together moving or progressing

towards a more important climax — that of the complete phrase. Thus:

EXAMPLE 6*b*.



Schumann's Novellette, played with *correct* accentuation, requiring the bar-places as denoted by the dotted lines at *b* (and not at *a* as in the original).[1]

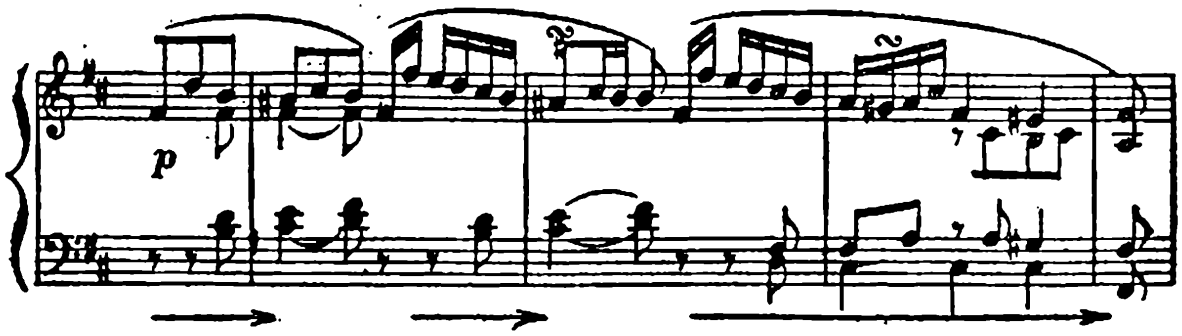
The incorrect notation of bar-lines.

[1] Composers, in the past (and many in the present), do not seem to have realised the simple fact, that the only possible real use of a bar-line is to indicate to the performer *where* the pulse-swing should be.

To prevent monotony, a musical composer will often purposely alter the straight course of the accentuation, and an unmusical or inexpert composer still more frequently does so from the want of fine feeling, or from ignorance; but both types seem equally to be obsessed with the idea that if bar-lines are but written down in unbroken sequence (so as to *look* symmetrical) this will ensure symmetry, or that this will throw dust in the eyes of people, and make them believe the work to be symmetrically perfect — like wallpaper! As a matter of fact, no musician does want wall-paper patterns instead of music, nor does the placing of the bar-lines where they are *not* wanted by the sense of the music, alter the accentuation one jot. The only result such obsession, carelessness or ignorance can have is to puzzle the performer, and to ensure that unmusical players will perform the piece musically "upside-down." Even many of the great Masters have sinned sorely in this matter of the true notation of their works, Schumann and Brahms perhaps most of all; whereas Beethoven's notation is perhaps most free from this blemish. In the old polyphonic writing there was of course the difficulty, that bar-lines would have been required separately for each part, certainly a chaos when four or

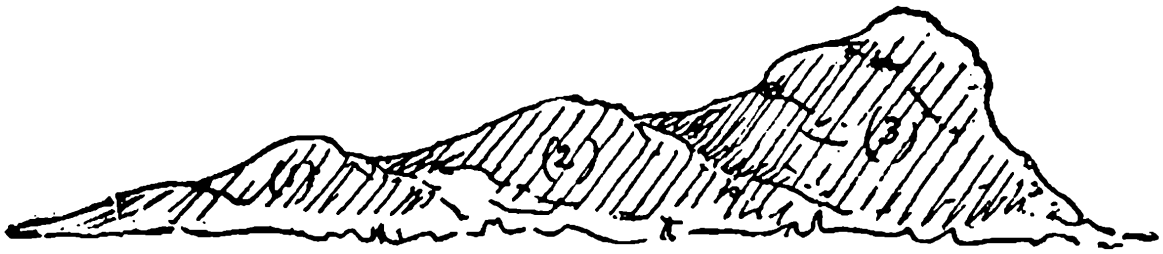
As one more example of this structure, let me quote from the slow movement of Beethoven's Sonata, Op. 2, No. 2, — thus:

EXAMPLE 7.



Or pictorially, it might be shown thus:

EXAMPLE 8.



All this shows us clearly how the idea of phrase, or sentence, implies *progression* towards some more or less definite point; by this sense of progression, of his *being led somewhere*, the listener's attention is attracted, and is retained.[1]

more parts were written on two staves only; but why in such a case put bar-lines at all, where they can only be mis-leading?

As one more glaring instance of such wrong barring see Chopin's Prelude in C minor — the true bar-line occurs two pulses later than the written bar-line. But such cases are innumerable.

As to nomenclature of structural details

[1] As to the word "phrase": it really does not signify whether we consider the musical *unit* to be a "motif," "idea," "section," "phrase," or "sentence." All this is purely a matter of mere nomenclature, music-terminology — a point of exceedingly small importance artistically. What does matter is that bar-lines should be recognised as denoting the general swing of the accentuation, and that Music-units (or the more complex "phrase" or "sentence" organisms) are always in themselves again *progressions* towards definite landmarks.

Harmonic movement necessary.

We shall moreover find that this sense of *going somewhere* implies that there must be a *succession* of *harmonies* (actual or implied) either forming or leading up to some form of harmonic cadence; we *must* have this, if there is to be any definite idea of Shape in what we accept as Music.

Let us now try to transcribe "God Save the King" so that it shall suggest (as far as possible) *only one harmony;* hear how this impoverishes the tune, thus:

EXAMPLE 9.



Or better still, let us try to compose a theme solely on one harmony, and we shall find that because it *goes* nowhere harmonically, nothing seems to happen. (*See* Exp. 10*a*.)

EXAMPLE 10*a*.



Whereas, if we now alter the same theme slightly, so that it may take harmonies, you will see how much more clear and interesting it at once becomes:

EXAMPLE 10b.



You see now, that the term "harmonic progression" is really a most apt and suggestive term; for you see, that a mere succession of un-related or un-progressive sounds or chords is quite meaningless. To have any meaning, musically, we require a *progress* of chords, intelligently leading towards definite landmarks, the landmarks in key and rhythm which we call "cadences."[1]

[1] Incidentally, you should here note, that the very process itself of learning, or assimilating any knowledge, is of this very same nature — it is but a form of progression.

The process of memorising also depends upon progression.

Isolated facts mean nothing; *to memorise anything* the only possible process is to bring the something you wish to memorise into some form of *progression*, or sequence *of thought*. That is, you must *chain* the something you want to fix in your mind *to* something *already* stored there; you must make use of something you already know, so that it shall *suggest* (as a mental progression) the something fresh which you want to fix in your memory.

In a word, you must build-on to the knowledge you already do possess further *progressions* of "onwardness," mentally.

In the case of Musical-memory, each note, each chord you play, must

Deliberate indefiniteness in composition.

True, in some few isolated instances, the composer has purposely written unclear, shapeless, jelly-like music, and not inadvertently, as only too often happens. Wagner, for

be made to *suggest* the next note or chord, etc. And unless you have made a *perfect chain* of such suggestion-connections, you do not remember and cannot remember any piece. In short, remembrance of a piece means that the suggestion-channels are all in good working order.

How to apply one's memory.

Vice versa, successfully to make use of the memory-connections thus stored in your mind, you must during performance *allow* the thing present and realised at the moment to *suggest* (as an automatic or reflex action) the thing which is to follow on. That is, you must *allow* the memory of each succeeding portion of the text to be automatically revived by the rhythmic swing of the portion of the passage you *are* playing at the moment, its melodic and harmonic progression, its mood, and each note of it in succession.

In short, you must *allow* your memory-stream to flow in the channels or courses you have previously made for it, and the only way to prompt these memory-connections into action is by keeping your mind vividly present *on the actual thing you are doing at the moment;* and you cannot help your memory by trying to recall the thing ahead; since this will disconnect or destroy the sequential action of your mind.

Memory failure.

The moment you begin to doubt your memory's capacity to "follow on," that moment you will hinder, if not completely stop its action. *If* you commit the fatal blunder of *trying to recall the next note,* this will at once paralyse the natural and safe action of the previously-made memory-channels; you will thus stop their flow, and your mind will seem to be a blank as to what comes next. Here it is not a case of your memory being incomplete or unreliable, but simply that you are *preventing* its natural action. Either the mental successions of "onwardness" are there, or they are not. If they are complete they will act with certainty if you let them do so; whereas, if they are not properly fixed in your mind, then no attempt to recall the *next* note will help you one jot.

In other words, if these mental connections or chains have been properly linked-up, you can only stimulate them into action by bringing your attention vividly upon the point you *are* engaged upon at each moment during the performance of the piece — so that it may suggest what follows. Whereas you will inevitably paralyse this natural sequential action,

instance, has used this device in the Introduction to "Das Rheingold" so as to give the vague, impalpable effect of

if you try to wrench your mind on to something ahead, — something not yet actually due in performance.

On the other hand, if these progression-suggestions are not firmly fixed in your mind, you must take steps to strengthen them, on the lines above indicated.

The various kinds of musical memory.

Here it is well to realise, that musical memory is a complex phenomenon. We must take care to use *all* the available memory channels; and they can only be rendered available by the application of close analysis, consciously or unconsciously given. These components are on the one side purely musical, but on the other side are technical, instrumental and muscular, or gymnastical. Hence we must analyse and thus memorise the musical progressions of the piece, its rhythmical, melodic and harmonic progressions, and above all things the inflections of its moods or poetic curves. But besides this strictly-speaking *musical* memorising of the piece we must also impress our eye-memory with the written page, and with the *lie* of the music on the keyboard — as keyboard progressions.

The necessity of muscular memory and its dangers.

Added to all this, we must also apply our muscular-memory — we must fix in our mind the physical sensations of its note-successions upon the keyboard, and the technical methods of their execution.

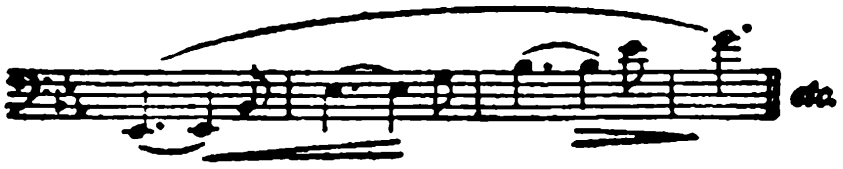
And it is just here where all the trouble begins: on the one hand, it is impossible to give one's mind to the musical interpretation of a *quick* movement, unless we do know the notes of it so well that we need no longer question what they are. To succeed in this, however, for a quick movement, we must have repeated its note-successions often enough to impress them thoroughly upon our automatic-centres, so that our fingers may be able to find the road automatically. Now the imminent danger always is, that in trying to acquire this necessary part of the performance-memory, we may totally destroy all our musical control over the piece. It is this same automatic necessity which so often leads players astray into the acquisition of purely automatic and mechanical methods of practice.

Silent practice.

The only remedy and preventive is constantly to insist on *musical attention;* and often to practice *without touching the keyboard at all.* With our fingers upon the keyboard, it is only too easy to forget to direct them; hence the great value of silent practice, with every note-inflection

water. It is all on the chord of E flat, you remember the rising flowing figure:

EXAMPLE 11.



He wishes to convey the idea of a mass of water, the Rhine, not seen as a definite sheet of water, but seen from *within* the water, from inside the river; and he could not have chosen a happier way of making the musical suggestion than by the means used. It has no surface, no bottom, and after ten minutes of it or so, you feel yourself floating in the swirl of the river — with the Rhinemaidens — and

imagined, and its impossibility of allowing the attention to flag, even for a moment. And when actual keyboard-practice is imperative during the process of acquiring the necessary automaticity in respect to the keyboard successions of the notes, even in this case never to allow our musical purpose to waver, never to allow our automatic, or gymnastic faculty to gain the upper hand and to fulfil its sway without our constantly directing and controlling it musically by our *mind*-centres — our will-power, our musical imagination and judgement.

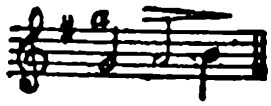
To prevent slithering.

To ensure such control we must constantly re-analyse the *rhythmical* constituents, or rhythmical *landmarks* of every agility-piece, however old an acquaintance it may be. The moment we thus insist on compelling the automatic centres to *fit their work* to our rhythmical vision, that moment the piece no longer seems to "run away," but is instead perfectly guided by our musical conscience. Hence also in performance, we must always insist on realising the TIME-PLACE, for each note; and our gymnastic faculty thus becomes our obedient servant and not our master. See page 29 on "Time-spot," page 30 "The act of consciousness," and page 53 "Wrong bass notes," also page 122 "On the memorising of fingering." Also see *Additional Note:* "The cause of stammering unmusically," page 59.

cannot think of them as stage people, swinging about on iron cages![1]

This law of Progression in Music applies not only in the case of the phrase or the sentence but applies universally, as much to the smallest details of the music as to its largest swings of form. As I have already pointed out in "First Principles" and elsewhere,[2] no one (not even a child-beginner) should be allowed to sound any succession of sounds, however simple, without being made clearly to understand that there must be *some* shape or progression even in such primitive attempts; thus:

EXAMPLE 12.

Not  but 

—therefore in fact suggesting harmonies; for instance:

EXAMPLE 13.



[1] Someone has asked, "What should we call this passage, there is no 'phrase' really in question, there being no harmonic progression?" I should define the figure as an *idea-unit* which, purposely, is not allowed to become definite enough to form a "phrase."

Purposely, Wagner has left the Prelude ambiguous, sheer invertebrate musical protoplasm, without any higher organisation of definite shape; its swelling, musically jelly-like indefinite mass thus accomplishes its purpose dramatically and scenically.

[2] "First Principles of Pianoforte Playing," page 126, and in "The Child's First Steps."

Inaccuracy in the subdivisions of the pulses also owing to non-perception of the element of progression.

You must next realise that it is from non-perception of this very point (non-preception of the fact of progression) that results all the rhythmical "sloppiness" so lamentably rampant; I refer to that unclear playing of passage-work, unclear execution of minute contrasts in the lengths of the notes, details seemingly so insignificant, yet upon the accuracy of which depends so much of our enjoyment of the music.[1]

How often indeed do we find the inexperienced (or bad) teacher's pupils playing triplets or quadruplets of notes all clipped together, thus:

EXAMPLE 14.



Do you see the cause of this fault?

It is clear enough, when you realise that you *cannot think music* (that is rhythm) unless you always definitely think of its Progression — we are constantly compelled to come back to this point!

To correct a fault of this nature, all you have to do then is to make the pupil realise that the triplet or quadruplet, etc., does *not* finish with the beginning of the sound of its last note, but, on the contrary, that the group lasts *up to the beginning* of the first note of the *next group* — the next pulse-throb. Thus:

EXAMPLE 15.



[1] In playing, the terms clearness and cleanliness refer to two distinct things; "clearness" refers to rhythmical accuracy, while "cleanliness" refers to the sounding of the right notes — without any "splitting" of them, etc.

You must show him, that *time* in music always implies the *dividing* up of Space; and in this particular concrete case, that it means movement in equal divisions of time always *up to* the next following pulse-throb.

In short, you must always think of the beat ahead, must always lead up to it, *divide up towards it*, if the "inside" notes of passages are to be clear to the listener.

And this rule applies not only when you have the "inside" notes (or in-between notes) *evenly* distributed between the pulses, but also when you have more complex rhythmical figures providing the in-between sounds, such as:

EXAMPLE 16.



Moreover, it applies when you have figures ending with *unaccented notes;* and it applies still with equal force even when you have a whole phrase or sentence moving towards its rhythmical climax with a decrease of tone.[1]

Progression always towards climax of phrase in spite of decrescendo

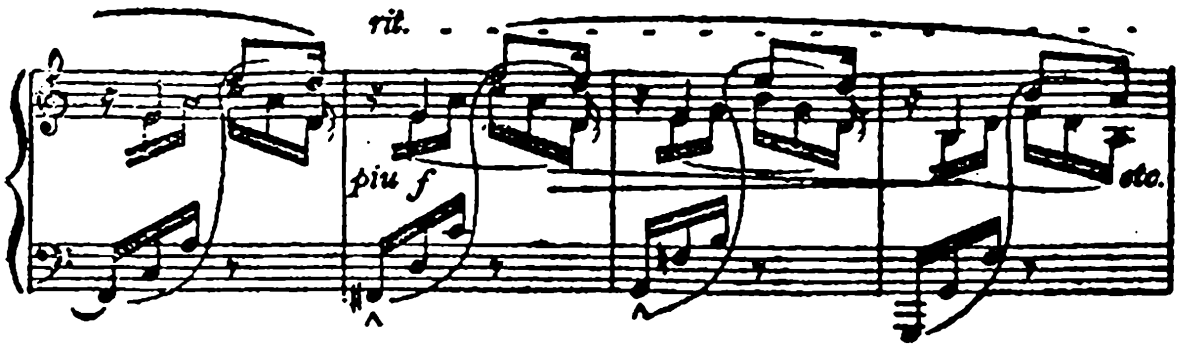
Let me give you an example of both points:

In Chopin's first Prelude we have a figure with such unaccented ending:

EXAMPLE 17.

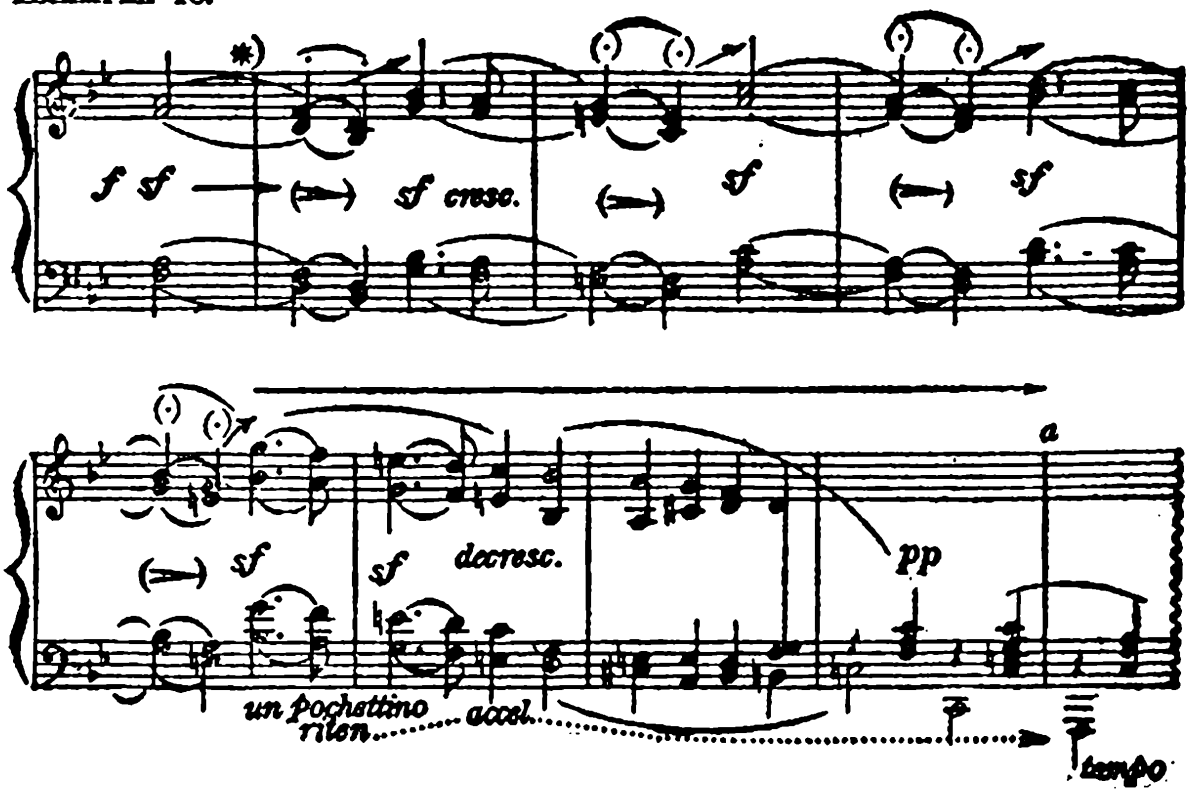


[1] We shall see later on, that *Rubato* must here come to our aid to make clear the onward striving of the phrase.



In the second subject from Beethoven's Sonata Op. 22, we have the second point illustrated, as well as the first.[1]

EXAMPLE 18.



[1] At first sight this Beethoven excerpt, from Op. 22, almost looks like a case of misplaced bar-lines; but it is quite correctly barred, for the *sfs* are here true syncopations, which are felt to go against the true rhythmical pulse, and which last must persist in spite of these *sfs*. The bar-line (or true pulse) may be shown by making the notes *on* it slightly staccato, as I have suggested. The whole tune grows towards the chord of *F* at (*a*). This is made clear by employing a very slight *rubato* during the last four bars — very slight indeed, so slight as to be unnoticeable even to pedantically-inclined ears.

Again, in Beethoven's 32 Variations in C minor, we have such figure with unaccented ending in the octave Variation:

EXAMPLE 19.



You see, in all these cases, the figure falls away as it were at its end, before reaching the next pulse. Nevertheless, unless we keep that next pulse accurately in view — unless we *measure* the places for the earlier notes as striving on towards such pulse — we cannot accurately place them in Time, and our performance will hence be inevitably ruined, musically.

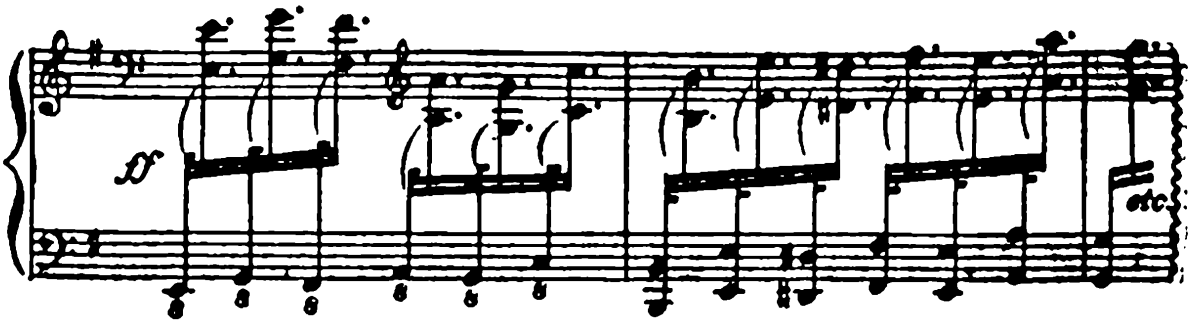
Passages broken between hands — correct thinking of them.

Again, in passages divided (or broken) between the hands, such as octave-passages, etc., how often does the pupil spoil these rhythmically, by clipping together the two successive hands.

The remedy is simple enough, immediate, and again of the same nature. Simply insist on the successive notes of the passage being thought of as one continuous flow of (or succession in) rhythm; it must not be thought as consisting of *two hands, each doing something different,* and therefore rhythmically disconnected.

For instance, the semiquaver octaves of the coda of Mendelssohn's Rondo, Op. 14, are usually clipped thus:

EXAMPLE 20*a*.



(Incorrectly played.)

Do not allow yourself to think of the two hands, as each one doing something independently, but insist on thinking such a passage as *continuous*, rhythmically; think of it in groups of six semiquavers, each one leading *up to* the beginning of each next group, and the supposed "difficulty" at once vanishes forever. Thus:

EXAMPLE 20*b*.



(Correctly played.)

The rule of course also holds good when the passage is of SINGLE notes in each hand, instead of octaves; also, when the alternations between the hands occur after several notes have been taken successively by each hand — when the alternations between the hands occur after whole groups of notes.

Broken passages, technical errors.

We must, however, bear in mind that such rhythmical faults do often and quite easily arise in such alternating passages from quite another cause, and that is from faulty Key-treatment — faulty Touch-habits.

In fact, such passages are often thus *made* "difficult," simply by disobedience to "the Law of Resting," which I have so strongly insisted upon in my various works on Touch and Technique.[1]

Indeed, the law of continuously *resting* upon the keyboard during the extent of each phrase may never be disregarded with impunity, not even in the case of "divided" passages. The point to remember, therefore, is that in all such passages (passages divided between the hands) the keyboard *must never be quitted by one hand until the* next *hand has a finger on its own first note;* the passage is thus linked-up continuously in a chain of "Restings," alternately taken up by the successive hands, and without break during the course of each phrase. For instance:

Not thus:

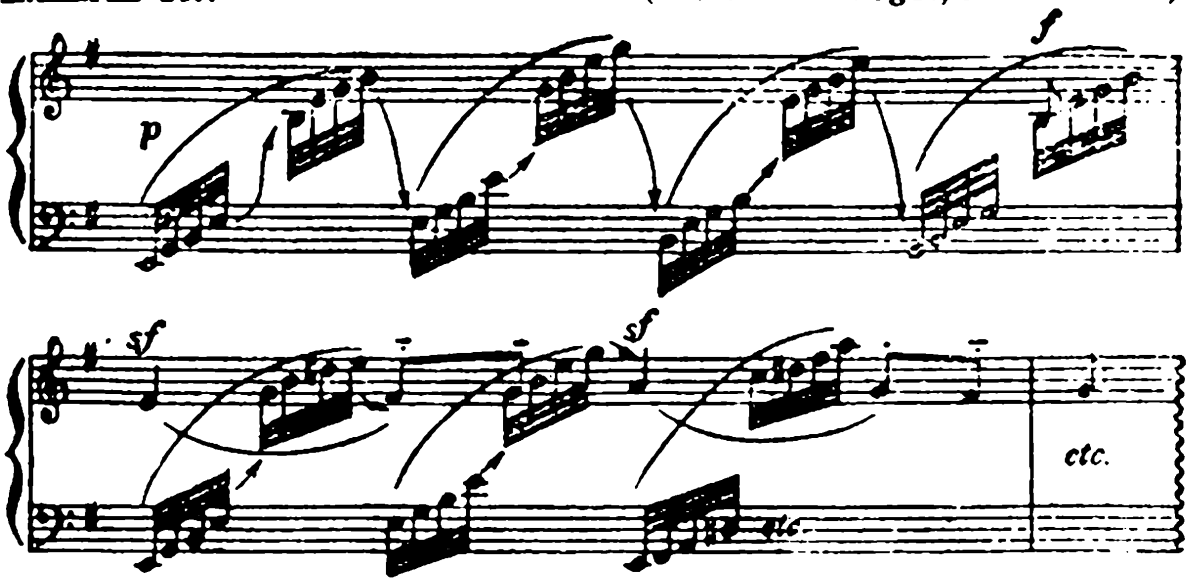
EXAMPLE 21*a*.



[1] Refer also to page 53 *re* "Wrong Bass-notes," etc.

But thus:

EXAMPLE 21*b*. (Prelude and Fugue, Mendelssohn.)

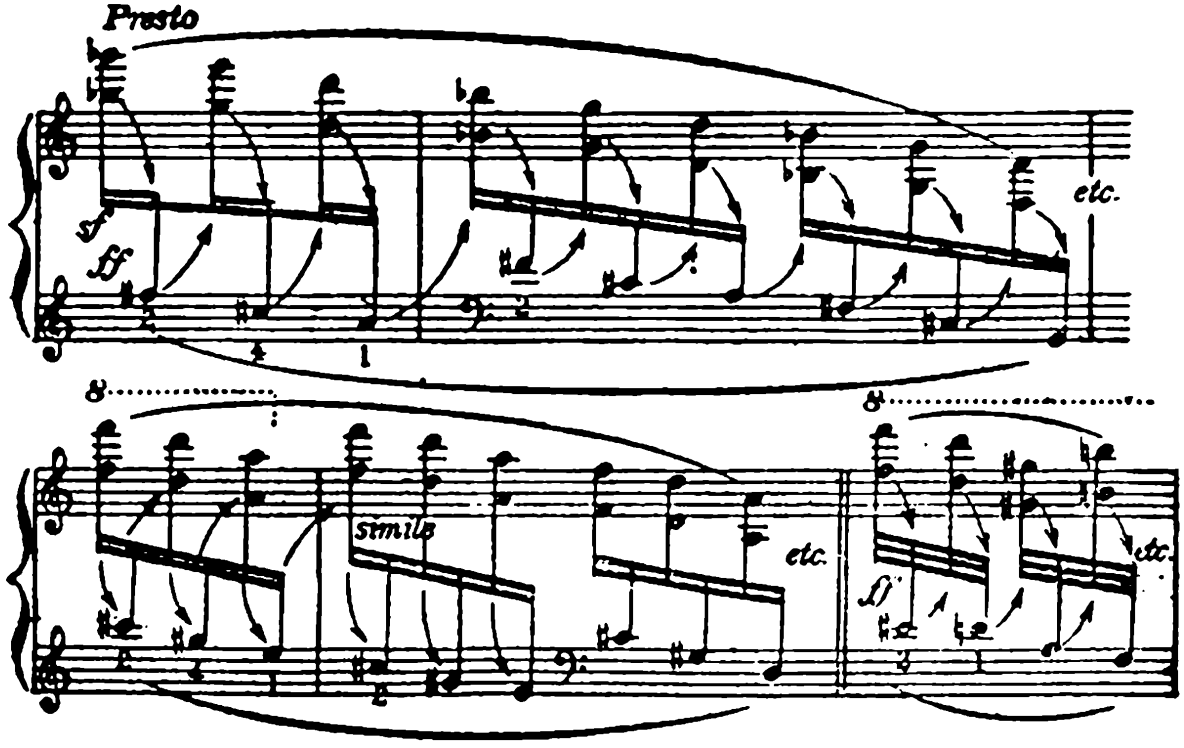


(The lecturer here showed how each hand in succession carries on the continuity of contact with the keyboard — the hands rising off the keyboard, but each one remaining in contact with it until the next has found its note.)

The following two excerpts are also suggestive:

(From Concert-piece in A minor, Tobias Matthay.[1])

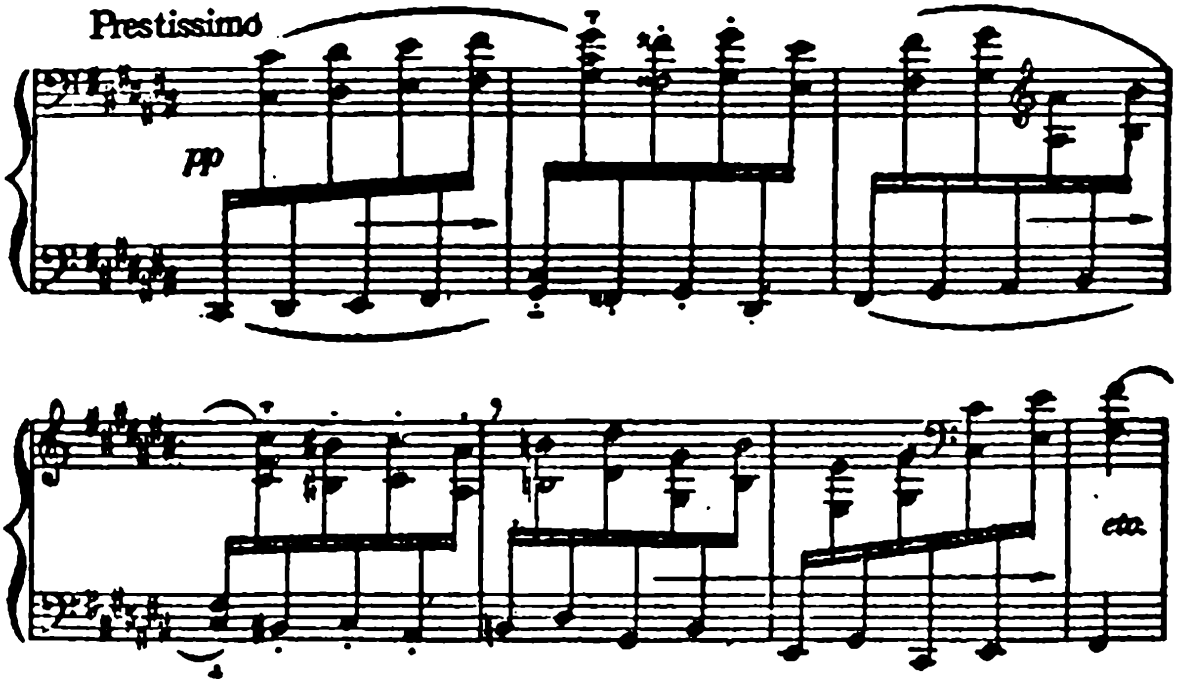
EXAMPLE 22.



[1] By permission of Messrs. Ricordi.

(From Coda of Rhapsody, No. II, Liszt.)[1]

EXAMPLE 23.



Wrong bass notes — and other notes.

It is of no use trying to correct the playing of wrong notes or "split" notes merely by telling the pupil to be "more careful" — this may happen to have some result, or it may simply make the pupil more nervous. The only true correction is always to point out the *cause* of the fault. In case of passages lying under the fingers, or passages divided between the hands this cause may be found in neglect of that law of "Resting" on the keyboard which should render all such passages really continuous, physically on the keyboard.[2] But in the case of skips and bass notes an additional cause of error may occur:

Such wrong notes often arise from a *non-remembrance* of what should be the right notes, at the moment. The fault here arises from a totally wrong musical outlook. First of

[1] In this last illustration *both* hands should remain in contact with the keyboard, at least so long as the passage remains *pianissimo*.

[2] Refer to page 51.

all, note that you should always think the music from the bass upwards, and *not from the treble downwards*, and secondly, note that you cannot recall a *mentally-detached* bass note any more than you can recall or remember any other fact or circumstance, *if you detach it from its memory-suggestions*. The only true correction of such bass-note *guessing* (and failing) is therefore to insist on the *musical-succession* of the basses being always noticed and noted. Here again, as everywhere else, you see the fact of PROGRESSION faces us; here it is the progression of each sound from and to its neighbouring one which must be noted, and thus fixed in the memory — the only way in which any sounds can be memorised musically. The basses, in playing, must therefore be thought as such successions, and not as a wild "grabbing" into unknown space (downwards from the melody) — in any case a proceeding totally against all laws of Key-treatment! (Refer to pp. 41–44, "On Memorising.")

Progression in its larger swings.

We have now seen how the idea of progression will help us to understand the nature of Phrasing — the very life of music; and how we cannot accurately "place" even the *inside* notes of a Pulse (i. e., the notes between two pulse-throbs) unless we constantly insist upon the keen realisation of this element of "towardness" or "onwardness" (as one may aptly term it) and further, that it still applies when figures and phrases have unaccented endings.[1]

A warning against purely mechanical "scanning."

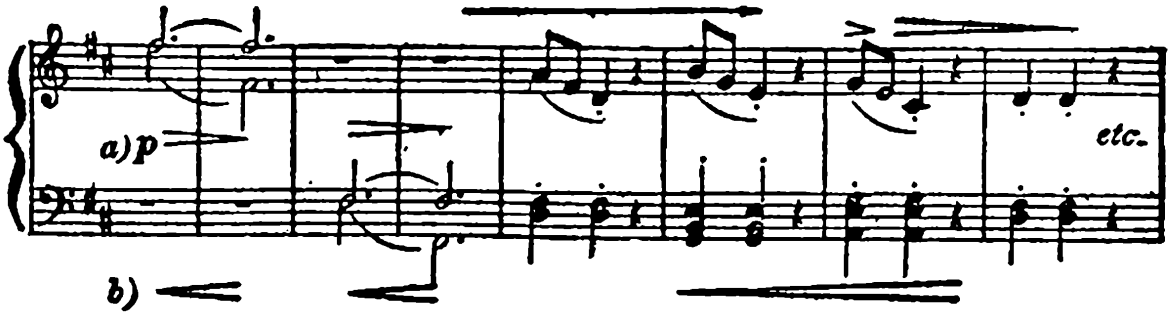
[1] In attempting thus to "scan" or analyse the structure of the Music one must, however, take care not to fall into the error of doing this mechanically — solely by rule. So far from doing this, one must always allow one's judgement to be swayed by the feeling to be conveyed — else the result may after all be totally unmusical.

For instance, the rule is, that in a full close the tonic chord falls on the more accented portion of the bar. It is a rule with many exceptions, but it has led certain one-sided musicians totally to mis-scan Music; for

But not only must one think "towards" pulse, and towards phrase-climax, one must also think towards the greater crisis-points of the larger Shape-outlines, for the same law applies with equal rigour in the performance of the larger ideas of Shape and Form. Continuity in performance (and in composition) still depends on the same principle, carried out however on a larger scale. That is, we must always have a continuous travelling towards well-noted musical land-marks, and the proportions of the smaller details of movement must nevertheless, all the time, be strictly subservient to those *larger outlines*, themselves wrought by this constant principle of progression.

Instance I have seen the Scherzo of Beethoven's Sonata, Op. 28, made to consist of four-bar phrases with the accent on the *last* bar, the tonic chord! See Exp. 24, at *b*:

EXAMPLE 24.



"*a*," correctly scanned rhythm.

"*b*," incorrectly scanned rhythm.

As a matter of fact, the true accentuation here lies just the opposite way — the dominant in the cadence each time carrying the accent, see "*a*." It is this very "contrariness" of its harmonies which forms the basis of the fun and humour of the movement. The proof of the correctness of this scanning lies in the last octave of the piece, for this is the long deferred resolution of the preceding cadences (so comically against-the-grain) it is the solution of the rhythmical riddle, since this octave cannot be construed as a syncopation. Whereas it would have to be so considered in the fallacious reading alluded to.

Indeed, in a really largely laid-out movement, such as we find with Beethoven, or with Tschaikovsky, we must often be content almost to gloss-over quite interesting points of expression-detail, so that we may not risk blurring the clearness of the large designs of these masters.[1]

To keep the *whole* in view is a question of memory.

Now, success in this respect (to keep the outlines clear) in the end resolves itself purely into a question of — MEMORY. Whether we are laying out a large movement, or a small one, it is absolutely essential that we should vividly *remember* the exact proportion of *musical importance* attaching to each of its component sections and climaxes, to its variously contrasting subjects, sentences, phrases, ideas, down to the actual importance of *each note* employed.

Only by such perfect *memory* of all its constituents can we hope to produce a musical picture perfect in its perspective, perfect in its outlines — perfect as a WHOLE.[2]

[1] Certainly, in a measure, the same care is required in works of smaller calibre, although it is easier to keep Outline in view in a short movement. The process of giving due proportion to the various sections of a large design and to the details of a small movement does however not really differ in principle from the process of giving a single phrase correctly.

Thinking of the "whole" expounded.

[2] In "thinking of the whole" this must not be misunderstood to mean that one *should be aware* of the whole piece all the time — at one time — that is absurd and impossible. Again, when we realise that we "*must think of every note*," this does not mean that we must think of all the notes of the whole, all at one time, that is equally absurd.

What all this means is, that in thinking of each note *as we come to it*, we may recognise and remember what its importance is relatively to the picture as a Whole; we must remember the proportionate "value" of each phrase, each bar, each note at the moment we are engaged in reproducing it, and feeling it. In other words, we must have an accurate *memory* of the "value" of each note *relatively* to the whole — from having recognised what is required of each note-detail to build up that Whole successfully; exactly as we must recognise what value to give to each blob of colour in painting a picture, if the result is to be harmonious;

This kind of memory is, indeed, the hardest task of the player — and I think it really is harder in our art than in any other.

But although this is the most difficult thing to learn — this necessity of constantly keeping in mind the Whole — the teacher nevertheless must unremittingly insist on the pupil attempting this task, from his veriest beginnings in the simplest music. For this attitude is the only correct one in Performance, just as it is also the only correct one in Composition, in Painting, Sculpture and in fact in all the arts. It is an attitude obviously in total antagonism to that "*doing of details for their own sake*" which I have already animadverted upon.

Thus we come back to the old truism — that we must never allow ourselves to apply the Means of expression for their own sake, but always for the sake of expressing something seen or felt not Doing for the sake of Doing, but always Doing only for the sake of something *beautiful* which we are perceiving at that moment.[1]

and this recognition of the constituent values can only be derived from an accurate memory of the Whole of these constituents, each one, as we come to it.

[1] Discussion of this necessity of attending to Shape, whether in playing or composing — and incidentally also *when we are listening* — here tempts me to a rather wide digression. We all know, or should know, how extremely difficult it is for us to take in a new musical work, how we must hear it more than once before we can really see it — indeed, must hear it many times before we can really perceive its sense, especially if it is a work of any serious musical import. **Perception of a new composition.**

Now we shall find, that really to perceive a *new* work at one hearing is not at all a matter of difficulty, but is one of *sheer impossibility* — sheer physical and psychical impossibility. The ground we have just gone over yields us the explanation of this fact.

In viewing a picture which is new to us, we cannot realise what it means until we perceive the relationships of its various parts; we cannot

perceive its general shape, nor the meaning of its details, except by *comparing* its various portions or constituents.

Necessarily, this implies that our eyes must run over its various outlines *again and again*, until the rapidly gained *memory* of these details thus enables us to form a conception of the Whole.

In comparison with this process of perception, how extreme is the disadvantage under which a new *musical* work is compelled to make its first appeal to the public ear! Without our knowing what is going to happen, the musical picture is unrolled before our mind at *one single glance!* It is gradually unrolled and obscured again, beginning at one corner and finishing at the other extreme corner.

Now, if it be a good composition, it is so on condition that the first bar (and every subsequent bar) is in perfect relationship to every other bar of the piece — even those bars as yet *unheard*. But as we cannot perceive these relationships at a first hearing, we cannot possibly realise the meaning of the major portion of the piece, however quick our perceptions, since we cannot have any notion what the *unheard* portions are going to be until they have actually been presented *at least once* to our ears. That is, we cannot possibly perceive the various relationships of the details of Shape and Progression of a piece until we have had the opportunity of *at least once* hearing all and every part of it, seeing that the earlier portions can only derive their true significance from the balance given them by the later portions.

Here we clearly see *why* it is that a new musical work, even of the highest merit — or because of that — takes so long before it is accepted. In the case of lengthy works, there is no remedy available; it is not practicable to repeat a "Götterdämmerung" several times in one evening, even were a hearer capable of enjoying the process, and so one must trust to the audience taking the trouble to study such huge works before trying to appreciate an actual "first performance."

But in the case of *short* instrumental or vocal works of serious content, given for the first time in public, I do seriously put forward and plead for the adoption of the custom of an immediate repetition of them; such works should be performed at least twice in immediate succession. This would give worthy new music a far better chance of being accepted forthwith.

The old masters unconsciously felt this, when, in their Sonata movements, they insisted on repeating all the subject-matter, before proceeding to its amplification.

A musical work of serious import does not consist of a mere succession of surprise-shocks to the musical ear, although there is also a demand and place (happily limited) for such form of nerve-excitement or sensation-mongery in music. The real backbone of any musical work, deserving the name of *composition*, is (and ever will be) its Shapeliness, its architecture, its emotional and rhythmical continuity and strength; and this element must necessarily largely remain hidden from us, when, at a first performance, we are compelled to go forward step by step in the dark — not having traversed the ground previously with our musical eyes.

ADDITIONAL NOTE

The cause of stammering unmusically.

Much bad playing, stumbling and stuttering, often arises merely from a non-realisation of the fact that all memorising, whatever its nature, can only be achieved by impressing upon our mind the requisite and correct *progressions*, sequences, continuities, or chains of succession of the music in all its details.

The teacher must therefore never allow a pupil to try to "correct" a fault, whether slip of the finger, wrong note, wrong time, tone or duration, by his playing the right effect *after* the wrong one.

It must be made plain that so far from being a correction, such proceeding is indeed *un*-practice. By playing the right note in succession after the wrong one we tend to impress a totally wrong *succession* upon our minds, and shall therefore risk repeating the blunder and its supposed correction the very next time we play the passage; and if we repeat it we shall be a good way on towards *ensuring* a stumble or stutter at that place.

The only true correction is to substitute the *correct succession* of sounds — to go back and *move across* the damaged place while carefully omitting the hiatus.